

THE TROUBLE WITH ROOT

Mr. Root, despite his resounding condemnation of my theory of meaning in his final sentence, has not succeeded in making any convincing criticism. Mr. Creath's answer seems to me quite sound. Root has overlooked certain crucial points that should have been evident enough but which, admittedly, I have not spelled out before; and he has thus performed the service of calling forth an explicit statement of them. These are:

(1) That splitting of certain compound one-place predicates into two is not prohibited does not imply that every compound predicate may be so split.

(2) One legitimate splitting of a predicate does not preclude other equally legitimate alternative splittings.

(3) A splitting of a one-place compound predicate may be a splitting *off* of a predicate, leaving a non-predicate residue, rather than a splitting *into* two.

To illustrate, 'picture of a unicorn' may be split into 'picture' and 'of a unicorn', two predicates we may quantify over. It may alternatively be split into 'picture of a' (applying to representational pictures) and 'unicorn', when only the former can be quantified over. It could, again, be split into 'picture', 'of a' (applying to pictorial and verbal symbols that are representational or descriptive), and 'unicorn' (a residue).

A natural splitting of compounds in comparing the meaning of 'centaur' and 'unicorn' gives 'picture of a' and 'centaur' (or 'unicorn'). We get parallel compounds of 'centaur' and of 'unicorn' by adding them to the predicate 'picture of a'. The terms 'centaur' and 'unicorn' then do not function as predicates in the parallel compounds, but as modifiers restricting the broader extension of 'picture of a' to certain of its subclasses.

Now consider the predicate 'depicts unicorns'. The broader predicate 'depicts' can be split off and quantified over; the residual 'unicorns' cannot, but modifies the broad predicate to result in a narrower one.

Come back, then, to the question whether 'of a unicorn' is a compound of 'unicorn'. Of course it is. 'Of a unicorn' applies to pictures and descriptions of unicorns, while 'of a centaur' applies to pictures and descriptions of centaurs.

It is true that I have in my writings rather commented upon than claimed to define the nature of 'compound'; but the clear cases seemed to me enough to make the point. The above perhaps to some extent clarifies the notion

further. Of the parallel compounds in question, the two predicates compounded function to restrict in different ways the extension of the common compounding predicate. 'Gent' and 'mine' do not, it seems, likewise operate when suffixed to 'deter' to pick out subclasses of things that deter.

NELSON GOODMAN